Interview with Robert Lyle Brown

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

ROBERT LYLE BROWN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: To start with, Bob, can you give us a little of your background?

BROWN: I came from a little farming community in Batavia, Ohio. My father lost a tool dye shop in Dayton, Ohio and two houses during the Depression. So we moved to New Jersey, where he started all over with the Radio Corporation of America. I went to school at Camden High. That was a far away place from the Foreign Service.

I went to Syracuse University from 1939-43 on a four-year scholarship, which I needed since I could not have afforded to go to University otherwise. At Syracuse, I had to decide what I was going to do. Eventually, I decided I would go into law—labor law— and choose later which part of labor law specifically. There would have been a number of choices, including government or arbitration or labor unions, which at that time needed some good legal advice, or corporations. I joined the ROTC at Syracuse. I have an arm I can't bend straight; so that when I went to the advanced part of ROTC, I was turned down for physical reasons. So I enlisted in the Naval Reserves; finished my training; joined the Navy; served in the Navy and came out with a medical discharge. Then I became a corporate officer in a real estate firm. This provided me a car, an air conditioned office, secretaries and money.

After I joined the Foreign Service, it took me ten years to get back to the income I made in the real estate business.

I also attended Temple Law School. That is not even in my records because I never bothered. I was accepted for night courses. But I got an appendicitis attack, which put me in the hospital and a recovery period. That upset the night school apple cart. In the meantime, I decided I wanted to go back overseas. The Coast Guard wouldn't take me. the Army wouldn't take me. So I took a “Junior Management Intern” examination a the US Government position, administered by the Civil Service Commission.

The next thing was that I received a call to come to the CSC for an interview. They asked me what I wanted to do. I told them I didn't know, but I wanted to go overseas because all my friends were overseas and I was very uncomfortable at home with young people losing their lives. I told them that my raison d'etre was serve my country and I didn't care what the assignment was as long as it was overseas. Then they asked whether I would be interested in the Foreign Service. I had never considered this possibility. I shrugged my shoulders and said it was fine with me. They said that they would be in touch with me in due course.

The next thing that happened was that I got a telegram from them, asking me to come to Washington. I filled out a lot of papers, of course. The FBI came and interviewed the head of the real estate corporation, who didn't know anything about my plans. I went to Washington, where I took an oral examination, during which, at the end of it, they asked me what I thought. It was an impressive Board. One of the members said: “Bob, what do you know about the Foreign Service that you have not learned from the books?” I told him that I had heard that it would be proper if you came from Harvard, Yale or Princeton; if your family had money and status it would not be a handicap; and finally, if you knew someone in Congress or in the Department it would be to your advantage. There was silence after my response. Five people sitting there in silence. They had asked and I had told them. Then the chairman turned to the panel and said: “I suppose we could use some

new blood." Of course, they were desperate at that time for people to go overseas. That is the way I got into the Foreign Service. I had always planned to quit when the war was over.

Q: You had a very interesting first assignment, almost unique. You went to Noumea, New Caledonia from 1944-1948. Did you get any training before you went overseas?

BROWN: We met in the old War Department Building which had become the new State Department which is now the old State Department which is the new Executive Office Building near the White House. We were in a training class on the ground floor of about twenty-five new Foreign Service officers. A fellow by the name of Foster, a former Consul General who had served in South Africa. He had picked up some of the Southern African brogue. We had to learn accounts, visa and passport issuances and all the other Foreign Service functions. We had two or three books to work with, called "Foreign Service Regulations." That was it. We had tests and we had five weeks of training. I had said that I be assigned overseas where the troops were. I didn't care where or what as long as it was near troops. When the assignments were posted, I saw Paris and a lot of places I knew. And then there was Noumea. Nobody knew where Noumea was. I didn't ask the head of the course because he would have told me to go to the library. So I went down the hall where there were a lot of Foreign Service old-timers who talked in a very precise manner. I asked one whether he knew where Noumea was. He looked at me in complete disdain. I told him that I had just been assigned there. He said: "In that case, you should certainly know that it is in New Caledonia." I thanked him profusely, although I still didn't have the vaguest idea where that was. I finally went to the library to find out where I had been assigned. I did get near the troops and it was an absolutely unique experience because it was a one man post. Eventually, our Embassy in Australia gave up on trying to keep the New Hebrides because I got too far ahead of them on my reporting. It recommended, and the Department agreed, that the New Hebrides be put under my consular jurisdiction. I reported directly to Washington. I had the privilege of signing my own name to the telegrams. I had no one to consult. I had no telephones. I was the

pouch clerk, the communications officer who encrypted and decrypted messages, the visa issuing officer—which was a struggle in itself because the requirements at that time required 51 percent Caucasian blood and I was in a melting pot. We had a De Gaullist appointed as governor of the Island. The De Gaullists did not like Americans that much in any event. We had the Army and Navy making certain presumptive moves because they were bigger than everybody else on the Island, in including the government. There were as many as 100 ships sitting out in the port at one time. So I had a lot of seaman-shipping work. I also had to negotiate on behalf of the military on things that had to be done or trying to protect the military while the French were trying to move in.

Q: Give us an illustration of the problems created by our military.

BROWN: For example, they wanted to expand their bases, because they needed more room, or they wanted to move some heavy equipment over some roads which were then left in gross disrepair or the military decided to go on a Sunday to shoot some deer and shot some cows also or you had a murder by an American Colonel of a Polynesian native. On that one, I was called at three o'clock in the morning. I was the first person on the scene and kept the French out of it until I found out the facts. Then I had to resolve the matter. It was a potpourri of things. I had US Navy ships coming into the New Caledonian waters without permission after the war was over. I had not been advised and neither had the New Caledonian government. I then had to try to pick up the pieces. The Navy had a big base with a lot of people. I was only twenty-four when I went to Noumea, but I was a lot older when I left.

I had to keep the accounts for all the other US government agencies having offices in Noumea, including the Economic Cooperation Administration and the War Shipping Administration. There were about six different government agencies for whom I had to keep the accounts, pay the bills, write orders, and implement all the telegraphic transfers and other communications.

Q: How did you deal with the French government in New Caledonia?

BROWN: It was one of the times that I had the proper insight. I was smart enough to know that I had a lot to learn and didn't have many resources at my command. If I couldn't get people to work with me and help me, I knew that many matters would not proceed as well as they should. We had admirals and generals by the dozens, flying in and out. I had studied French in college, although I never had used it orally, but I could communicate with the French government officials, including the Mayor and his entourage. At times my lack of experience was a handicap, but my sincerity, youth, good faith and the will—never say “No”, but rather “I'll try”—worked out very well. People might assume that I was taken advantage of because of the drawbacks. Some could have taken advantage of me, but I found that the relationship with both the US military and with the French, including two governors, Chiefs of Staff, the French military, and the local government, were excellent. The good working relationship with the military was to pay off subsequently when the bases were closed.

As I look back on it, I now realize how lucky I was and how well it worked out, simply because of attitude.

Q: Were the French officials fighting with the American military?

BROWN: They were not fighting the Americans because they too were in a far away place with a war going on, but you can imagine what happened with all of the Navy ships in port coming and going and the aircraft landing and taking off and all the good things—the Army-Navy clubs not to mention the war material. The importation of civilian goods to maintain the Red Cross and the Army personnel was passively agreed to by the French except when they got pushed and things got so gross that they had pull the system up to let them know there was a French government. Our military of course couldn't wait and always had to things immediately. When the war in the Pacific ended and Americans began to leave it become evident that many did not want to see the US withdraw but

rather replace France as the political power. The “colonials,” as differentiated from the “metropolitan” coming directly from France to manage the country (both politically and economically), wanted us to stay (basically for economic reasons); the indentured laborers from Indonesia and Indochina felt that we (the US) was a friend and that their interests rested far more with us than the French, and the Melanesian natives who considered their interests would be better under the Americans than the French. In short we had earned the respect of a variety of nationals, many of whom wanted us to stay. I remember well sending dispatch to the Department on this subject and concluding that the bottom line for the French was that their heads said “yes” but their hearts said “no.” The bottom line was that after all that had transpired we were departing a Pacific island nation where we had gained the respect of a varied number of foreign nationals.

Q: How did the departure of the Americans take place?

BROWN: When the war in Europe was over—VE Day—that was a big deal for us in the Pacific, but we still had a war to fight in the Pacific. On the other hand, the war had continued to move through the Solomons to the north and we were becoming a supply and training base and even those services were beginning to move north and our presence was being drawn down—fewer ships, fewer personnel. At the beginning, we were in one of the centers of the action, but as time passed, so did the role of New Caledonia. When VJ Day came in August, 1945, everybody wanted to get home, including me. My commitment to myself was that the day the war was over, I would send a cable of resignation. But there was too much to do. When the American military started to move—it can move into battle and out of it pretty quickly. This was appropriately disconcerting to the French because all of a sudden they were left with roads to empty bases, telegraph lines going to unpopulated areas and docks sitting empty. The whole infrastructure was being pulled up and put on ships. Away it went. It got almost to unruly at times. We had to develop a program to determine who stayed behind so that the property could be disposed of appropriately. We had legal problems because, many of them not having been resolved during the war. That is when the negotiations with the French became intense. I didn't have the resources—the

military lawyers—to call upon. The Coast Guard wasn't around to put the seamen into the brigs or the Army to put its men into stockades. I became the keeper of all these problems.

I bought a Consulate while I was there. I was so conscientious (at that time) that I read everything I could get my hands on, even in French. I used to get the Federal Register in the pouch and reviewed it carefully. It was because of this dedication I saw a statement on the sale of surplus property for tangible property to foreign governments. I wired the Department referring to the appropriate citation in the Federal Register and asked whether I could undertake a negotiation to exchange our surplus property for a Consulate building and residence. We were renting very inadequate quarters down on the dock. The Department gave me carte blanche, so I found a builder who had a building partly constructed who agreed to modify the structure to accommodate a residence and the required office space. I bought it for $25,000 worth of trucks, which probably would never had returned to the US and may well have ended up in the sea and $15,000 worth of telephone poles and wires which were spread throughout the island, which we obviously would never have taken. So I got the Consulate built and the military gave me enough silver and table settings for 100 people and a music room with a piano. I had a dumb waiter to bring the food to the formal dining room. From the Consulate one had a view of the whole city. It was a beautiful Consulate which we got at practically no cost.

Q: What was the nature of your political reporting towards the end of the war and after the armistice?

BROWN: I remember that every year I used to get a cable saying that “Performance report on Brown not received. Please telegraph over-all rating and send complete report by next air-pouch.” Every year I was so naive that I would send back a cable saying “Brown in charge.” Signed “Brown.” If I had to do it all over again, I would have written some beautiful prose about myself. That is the only report that was requested of me.

I did a lot of the things —I had many instances of life and death and other difficult experiences—on that island. I never had time to report them; they solved them. That was enough. There was other work to be done. When I had a window of opportunity, I started to record my observations. I wrote a tome on the anthropological, psychological, cultural and political circumstances that obtained in New Caledonia and what those implied for the future. I got all kinds of accolades on that. When I returned to Washington, some people didn't want to see me because New Caledonia was far away; others asked that I come in to see them. They didn't want to ask me what happened on the island and what I did, but they wanted to discuss that report. It was a lesson to me because obviously the Department was a political animal and the other things were “nuts and bolts” that should be solved in the vineyards. There was no real recognition of what I had done, except I had a Foreign Service Inspector come to New Caledonia and he wrote back a report which said that he had never seen anybody who had to work so hard and who got so little recognition. He recommend a two-grade promotion immediately. That helped my morale because if he hadn't come, I would still be at the same grade and still in New Caledonia: Believe it or not after nearly four years, uninterrupted years, the Department perfunctorily authorized “home leave and return” orders.

Q: You were there until 1948. How long did we keep that post after that?

BROWN: The South Pacific Commission started its work while I was stationed in Noumea. That became a focus point for me because I truly believed that we should not have gotten caught in another confrontation or war in the Pacific area without giving greater consideration to the islands there. I had learned that there was so much to know about the Pacific. If you live in a little island and people come in and out and you listen. There was even a Cardinal from the Solomon Islands who came to Noumea and I had to fingerprint him, which made me a little nervous, in order to give him a visa to come to the United States. He suggested to me places where ships could land easiest with the least danger. I wanted to get the South Pacific Commission set up and I thought it would be great if it

were headquartered in Noumea, even though I would not have been there. I even made a recommendation that we have a roving consul who would go around to the various to these Pacific islands every two or three years to talk with people, learn about problems and pick up maps of the waters. There was a lot available because island people were, at that time, open people. They are very generous; and I think that is true of most of those residing in the Pacific islands. Nothing happened to this recommendation. When I was in Washington, I put a very long proposal in a “Suggestion Box”. I went to various agencies. I went to CIA, to DoD. Everybody said that it was a great idea but no one would pick up the initiative. Eventually, three years later, a panel was convened to consider my “Suggestion Box” proposal.

When the Department decided to issue “Home Leave and Return” orders, I thought that was not proper and asked whether there wasn't an other assignment available. I had married a New Zealand girl while in New Caledonia. In that period one had to resign if one wanted to marry a foreigner—especially when they spoke better English than I did! I sent in my resignation but was given permission to marry. We were married by the Mayor of the City and the Governor's daughter was there and they opened the church for us which had been left by the military. It was a great event. In any case, in response to my inquiry about another assignment, the Department sent me a cable saying that I had been “administratively” assigned to the Department. So we packed our few belongings, which was not that big a deal, and shipped them to San Francisco. When I got to Washington, I was asked what I had done with my effects. When I told them that I sent them to San Francisco, they said that I was not authorized to that. I told them that I had looked up every regulation for the definition of the term “administratively assigned” and I could not find it. They checked and couldn't find it either. Their (personnel) answer: Well, you shipped your stuff without authorization. You have a real problem and we will have to reassign you so that we won't have more trouble. So why don't you go over to the Department of Commerce and take a course for eight weeks. You have been away for a long time and need a refresher.” I thought that was a fair conclusion. Everybody in the course got per-

diem, except me. I wasn't making that much. I had starting salary of $2,500 per annum and had not been promoted to much more. When I asked why I was not eligible for per diem like all the other State participants, the answer was that I had been “administratively assigned” to the Department and therefore not eligible for per diem. I never did receive the per diem and paid for staying in Washington out of my own pocket, which wasn't very deep. Eventually, we went to Casablanca.

Q: You were in Morocco from 1948-50 as chief of the economic section. What was the situation in Casablanca in those days?

BROWN: Let me first describe our arrival. The Consul General invited my wife and me to the Villa Mirador on Anfa Hill to stay in his residence, which we considered very thoughtful. We had been taken from Gibraltar to Casablanca in a huge US military aircraft with our pitiful small baggage. Every morning when I suggested that I go to the office I was told that we had a long trip and should get more rest. I had never had a better trip in my life. We landed in Gibraltar after a cross-Atlantic sailing on an Italian ship. However, the Consul General insisted that we stay at the residence and enjoy ourselves and read up on the local situation. This went on for about eight days. We didn't meet anybody; we were totally isolated in a very nice environment. Our bed room was the room that Churchill occupied during the Casablanca meeting. One day, the Consul General told me to go to work the next morning. His tone changed; everything changed. I got to the office and found out why I had been kept from the office. They didn't want me to meet my predecessor. When he left, all his contact files also left. Everything was gone and I had to start all over again. Apparently my predecessor had developed such good relations with the French, with Moroccan businessmen and other, that he was living better than the Consul General. He wanted that stopped. So I had to start from scratch. That was my introduction to Casablanca.

Q: Why had this situation developed?

BROWN: It would have been odd in most other countries, but there was a treaty of Algeciras in 1906 which provided for extra-territoriality. This was the last place where we had such privileges. It was therefore an interesting environment to live in. It meant that neither the laws of Morocco or the laws of a French protectorate were applicable to American citizens. The US Code of Federal Regulations was the law that governed American citizens. We had our own court. The foreign exchange regulations did not apply. Import licenses did not apply. With this kind of freedom, American soldiers who had been through Morocco at one time or another and aware of this situation, came back when the war was over. They were canny, smart and were in the right place because Morocco needed everything. The French restrictions applied to all but the Americans, which made us unique. It gave them an outlet to take Moroccan francs for American goods. Americans could bring in merchandise, etc. and sell it at ten times the cost, even if it were francs. Those francs ended up, illegally in Tangier where there was a free exchange market. With these dollars, the Americans brought more goods from the US which they sold in Morocco at tremendous profits and so it went. Moroccan businessmen were willing to back up any American who came without money because the system was so good and the American could be the front. Americans got very wealthy in this way, but it irritated the French no end. The French were then the protecting power. Needless to add our relationships with the French government officials was somewhat less than cordial.

Q: Were you under any instructions either from the Department or the Consul General to see whether something could be done about this?

BROWN: In the first place, all the businessmen recognized the sensitivity. We understood the French position, but we also understood our Treaty rights. Some Americans moved to the extremes of the law, but always within the margin. The French were very irritated because they couldn't control it and therefore would sometimes do things that were illegal. We had legal rights, but if we couldn't handle it, then we get in touch with the Department and our Embassy in Paris to see if pressure couldn't be mounted against the Governor,

who was appointed by France, to correct whatever French illegalities were occurring. Is it any wonder that American businessmen became so wealthy? It was like the chicken that laid the golden egg and they didn't want to have anything happen to the chicken. They would return to the US, and generate Congressional pressure on us. The pressure at times, was considerable. It was interesting how the Department in many respects was not always responsive. We were in the front lines, took much of the Congressional heat, but were not always provided the support we need to counteract French initiates which were contrary to our legal rights.

Q: In many respects, that shows how the Department works. If the issue isn't of political moment, it wouldn't take a stance.

BROWN: It was also a sticky wicket. There wasn't anything in it for the Department and our Embassy in Paris saw some of these events in Morocco as adversely affecting broader US/French interests. On the other hand, we had legal rights. When matters got to extremes, the Department upheld them or tried to. In the meantime, there many days, weeks, months when we did not get the response we needed.

Q: I would have thought that the French would have tried to expel the Americans who were excessive.

BROWN: The French Protectorate authorities tried about everything, but they also tried to stay within certain boundaries. There was still an economic assistance program to France and still needed our help. France was not as independent as it would have liked to have been. The shadow of de Gaulle continued to hang over the country.

Q: Did you feel that the Consul General was looking over your shoulder to make sure you didn't get in too deep?

BROWN: The first Consul General—C. Paul Fletcher—was a very nice, passive Officer. He didn't want to ruffle the waters. He was not a tiger and that is an understatement.

The next one was a tiger by the name of John Maddon. He was a Texan. He had been at one time an honorary sheriff and was quite proud of that. He was more aggressive. Casablanca was a Consulate General; we had an Embassy in Rabat, but all the commercial work was in Casablanca. That's where things got hot and miserable. I had to be careful. I remember being offered things that I didn't want—including very expensive watches. It was not unusual to be handed a small box with the donor saying “It is nothing but a token. It is not valuable.” Someone offered me a lovely house. My wife and I had been living in a place down by the docks with no hot water, a straw mattress and a primus for cooking. People used the hallway as a bathroom. If we looked out of our window we looked down into a pissoir! When I was offered a lovely house by an American businessman, I told him I couldn't afford it. He asked me what my housing allowance was. When I told him, he said “You got it”. I said I couldn't—it was too nice and worth far more on the market. He said that he had build it for his mother. He had married a Moroccan Jew. His mother came from New York she said that she didn't like it and didn't want it. So he had an empty house. I had to be very careful and I discussed the matter with the Consul General and we agreed I could accept provided there was mutual understanding by all parties that there would be no special favors.

I want to add one other story. One night, an “Immediate” cable arrived from the Department. I was the duty officer at that time. We used the strip coding system. I had to go to the office to decode the message. This message began “Atomic bomb exploded today.” I immediately called the cryptographic officer. For security reasons the Department drew an arbitrary line so that the cable began in the middle which on this occasion was the wrong spot. At 3 o'clock in the morning. It had quite an impact.

The other interesting event started when the Consul General called me to his office. He had a Russian cook with a head always shaved. He was a big man, nice, but big. The C.G. told me to go to the residence and fire him and get him out of the house before he came home for lunch. He gave me the cook's termination pay. He opened the drawer of his desk and gave me a gun to put in my pocket. He hoped that I didn't have to use it but he wanted

the cook out of the house immediately—one way or another. In those days, most officers did what they were told. I went to the house to talk to the cook, whom I knew. We talked and had coffee. I explained the situation to him and he left without any problems and I returned the gun to the C.G.

I remember an American who was in the French Legion coming into the lobby of the Consulate, and took his gun out of the holster, shot a clock on the wall in the lobby, then proceeded to shoot himself. He had evidently had had a hard time in the Legion, which once having joined, you don't leave until your contract runs out. He couldn't get out and he knew it. So he came over from Marrakech down the mountains and committed suicide on American soil.

Q: Your next assignment was in Kobe/Osaka from 1951-54 as chief of the economic section in Kobe and officer-in-charge in Osaka. Tell us about that.

BROWN: I said earlier that I intended to leave the Foreign Service after serving in New Caledonia. When I got the offer of an assignment to Morocco, I couldn't refuse. Casablanca sounded like such a far away place. So I said to my wife: “Just this one more time. Then I'll have had enough and can go to law school.” In Morocco, I got orders assigning me to advanced graduate economic training at Northwestern University, which is really what I wanted. I had studied political science. I knew also that as an Foreign Service staff officer I was still not a full fledged FSO and if I were to move up in the Service, I would have to get out of the political area. I had moved up as a staff officer to such a level that I couldn't afford to go back to the bottom of the ladder as a career FSO. I thought that economic training would have been useful to me whether I stayed in the Service or went into law—banking, international trade, etc. I would have more assets. Naturally I decided that I couldn't quit when the Department was offering me advanced graduate economic training from Northwestern University, it was on to Kobe, Japan.

I had done some economic work at Syracuse. I really didn't need the sophisticated advanced training in micro- and macro-economics, statistics, projections, analysis, etc. for my assignment to Kobe. When I got to Tokyo, the Embassy wanted me stay there. But Kobe was a consulate and then there was also a sub-consulate in Osaka. It was a big consular district—steel, shipping, textiles, and lots of money. So I decided to go to Kobe. The Supreme Allied Commander—MacArthur—was still running Japan and this in itself created a unique situation. The Japanese government was following our directions and policy guidance. With MacArthur's departure all of this suddenly stopped. It changed the whole situation, including the beautiful house that we had—owned by the tenth richest man in Japan. It sat on the mountains. It had a boiler room which needed engineers with graduate certificates in order to operate it twenty-four hours per day. It was like a ship with a conveyor belt to load the coal into the furnace.

The transition was interesting because then we had to start to use our abilities and wits to influence the communities in which we were assigned. As I stated the most important industries in the Kobe/Osaka area were textiles, shipping and steel. American business, knowing that Japan needed everything, flooded into Japan. We need to watch to make sure that this business was in the US interests and that it would foster positive and progressive Japanese economic development. The Japanese had limited finances for expansion. The basic challenge was grass roots work at the industrial-business level to bring US and Japanese business together in a manner which would complement each other—importers and exporters for example.

Q: Did you see any glimmerings then of the problems that have occurred in the 1980s?

BROWN: I did. In fact, I remember, that despite the basic level the Japanese were working, they were gradually tooling up. I could see the quality starting to come out of a primitive post-war setting. One could project that every day was going to be better for Japan. In addition, all they needed was a blackboard and chalk to improve their science and technology. They were dedicated and determined. It was a just a matter of organizing.

You could see that coming. I found many vignettes of knowledge, as I called them. We all had to write reports and that I did. But I also picked up a lot of vignettes every week that were slivers of relevant information. I was sure the same thing was happening in other places throughout the world. I initiated a series of monthly economic notes transmitted through the Embassy, as it insisted. The monthly economic notes became weekly and world-wide requirement through a new directive. It was a great way to report substantive bits of relevant information which wasn't being reported in any other way.

Q: After Kobe, you went to Brussels for four years 9(58-58) as chief of the Economic Section.

BROWN: I had been assigned by the Department as assistant commercial attach# in Paris. That was a big Embassy in a nice city. I was thrilled. I came back to Washington, went to briefings, did all the things one does to get ready for their next assignment. Three or four days before we were ready to get on the ship, the head of the Inspection Corps, Ray Miller—who had inspected in Kobe when I was there—called me and told me that the Embassy had just put another officer in my job in Paris. I would be therefore the low man on the totem pole and he didn't think that was fair. He had gone to Personnel and had told them that they couldn't do that to me. He had also told them that if Paris wasn't going to give me the assignment that I was supposed to have, it didn't need me. He had in fact negotiated for me to become the chief of the economic section in Brussels and the assistant commercial attach#. He had served in Brussels and thought this was far better assignment. His intervention was a blessing. If it hadn't been for him, my career might have been entirely different. It was a good assignment because while I was there we closed the Foreign Economic mission and I had to pick up the residual responsibilities. The World's Fair took place while I was there and more importantly the establishment of the European Common Market. That presented me with the opportunity of getting the American businessmen adjusted to the new challenges.

Q: Who was the Ambassador then?

BROWN: Fred Alger was the first Ambassador. He was the former Treasurer and Governor of Michigan. He had money and was a political animal. After him came Mr. Clifford Folger of Folger, Knowland and Co., a business firm in Washington, DC Although both appointments were political, it worked to my advantage because they felt more comfortable and at ease in talking to someone who knew finance, banking and business. Fortunately, I had a great rapport with both of them.

Q: What were the principal issues you dealt with?

BROWN: One was putting an end to the economic assistance program which surely was becoming redundant but for the recipient was hard to imagine how to manage without it.

Q: How do you put an end to something like that?

BROWN: What you do is to build other bridges that will assure the host government that you are not abandoning them. You get people to business conferences, economic conferences, financial meetings—you get them to go to the United States—and then they start to feel secure. As long as you give them things, that was fine. But the Belgians had pride; they were smart; they knew the program had run its course. But we had to convince Washington to have the courage to close the program. We had to suggest to Congressmen when they came through Brussels that maybe the assistance program should end. It was a little campaign. The man who was running the program outranked the Economic Counselor because he was a Minister. That didn't help. We got the Ambassador on our side. We nibbled away, little by little. Some thought that we couldn't discharge the residual responsibilities. They were absorbed with no problem and no big deals.

The other aspect—and this was a real promotion program—was to get Belgian and American businessmen better acquainted. There was in fact a sort of a triangle with the Congo being the third point. Then there was the development of the World's Fair which was a big deal. I was given no money, no authority, no personnel, although the powers-

to-be had decided that a World's Fair was an economic matter and had assigned me to pick up the chips. The Kennedy Center in Washington was designed by Edward Stone. It was Stone who did our Embassy in New Delhi. I was acting on behalf of the United States to arrange our participation in the World's Fair. No one in Washington was interested in the very early but necessary preparatory work; it was just added work on somebody's desk—you had to get legislation and money. It was a bureaucratic problem without much profit. While Washington was doing its thing, I was picking out the site. Ed Stone came out and I met with him. He undertook this initiative pro bono. Our respective wives went into one room; Ed and I met in the dining room. I described to him the Europe as I saw it, including Russian participation in the Fair. The Europeans knew we had lots of money, lots of cars and material things. What we had to show them was that we had some cultural savoir faire, some couth. As I described the situation, he asked what the Pavilion should be like. I remarked the Russians were bringing everything, but an Army tank—heavy cars, heavy agricultural equipment, etc. They were going to emphasize their “things.” We wanted to show another side. It was then that Ed decided the US Pavilion should be light and airy. He designed in rough on the dining room table what was to become the basic outline of the Pavilion. Subsequently I became the Acting US Commissioner-General to the World's Fair. Soon Congressmen were coming to Brussels and Washington moved in. They named a political appointee to be the Commissioner-General, Congress appropriated money and staff was sure to follow. They came and took it all over. I was never subsequently consulted—as if I hadn't existed.

Another good lesson that I learned was from my experience in Noumea where I worked alone. One doesn't learn from oneself or at least it is the hard way. When I got to Casablanca, we didn't have the greatest Consul Generals of the Service. They were nice gentlemen and I do not mean to demean them, but they were not intellectual giants. In Japan again, I was my own boss; I was given a free rein. I was put in charge of the Osaka office, giving me two offices to worry about. But in Brussels—the first time I had worked in an Embassy—I discovered that working under a smart person, finding out how they

operate, how they write, how they set their priorities, how they communicate and then trying to help them to be successful—you don't have to worry about yourself—you are really learning and they will make you successful. That was my lesson from my Embassy assignment. I am grateful that I had the other experiences, but there were no career rewards from them except those I had in my memory.

Q: Who was your mentor in Brussels?

BROWN: The man who will always stand out in my mind is Charles Adair, who became an Ambassador to the OECD, to Ecuador and to Panama. He was indeed a scholar, a gentleman, knew the priorities, knew when to give you leeway. He became a father figure to me.

Q: After Brussels, you were assigned to the Department, first in the Economic Bureau (1959-62) as Chief of Loan Coordination and Economic Development.

BROWN: I got there because Charles Adair became the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Economic Affairs. He wanted me back because he saw this little operation had greater potential it had been headed by a Civil Service officer for years. It had become pedestrian and ritualized. It provided for an opportunity to be an observer at Export-Import Bank meetings, an observer at Treasury meetings on international financial problems and worked with the American Executive Directors at IMF, IBRD, IDA, IDB and others. It was a great opportunity to get involved in decision making. What made it greater is that when you take over a rather moribund operation, and if you make any progress at all, it is a real plus. I created a “schedu-graph,” which was a way of finding out what countries had their hands in what pockets, for what types of loans, for what purposes. As countries could get money from our assistance program, from Export-Import Bank, from the international institutions, from Treasury, etc. I started to pull all of this together with the assistance of a lady who was not wanted by any other office in the Bureau. She was given to me after having been neglected by all others. I explained to her the opportunity of what we were

about to undertake and she became so enthused that even if I returned to the office after dinner to do some work, she would be there. She had been known as a woman who came in late and left early, who always took her sick leave. All of a sudden she changed; she would sneak to work without me knowing it. She became enthralled with this project. It was not a big deal, but it was well organized and she could run it. She was proud of her accomplishments. She became so knowledgeable that all the State geographic Bureaus, the international organizations, the Export-Import Bank, our people at the U.N. used her and my office to find out the status of status of portfolios, by Continent, by country, whether they were balance-of-payments loans or commodity loans and which. While simple to put together, it became invaluable. That made my day because our operation became something of a new centerfold. I was consulted much more by the geographic bureaus. All of a sudden a pedestrian job, a statistical job became a substantive matter giving us input. Ambassador Galbraith flew back from New Delhi angrily blamed me for killing a steel mill project. Some one from the India desk had told him that I had drafted the cable saying that we should not fund a steel mill. It was one of my better decisions. I recall this because it gives you an idea of the influence one can derive from mastering statistics and facts.

Q: That is how Stalin got ahead. After the E Bureau job you went to the Senior Seminar.

BROWN: That is an interesting story. While in the E Bureau, I went on several trips to ECAFE meetings in Asia. Also UN conferences. I was flying back and forth to Asia as if it were going out of style. During one of the trips, the Bureau gave away my operation to AID, which eliminated any raison d'etre for me to stay in the Bureau. Fortunately, I was assigned to the Senior Seminar. The Bureau wasn't going to let me go, having decided that I was indispensable because they couldn't find a replacement, for what significant responsibility I was never sure. Finally Personnel came through with an acceptable replacement. This is part of the burden you put up with in the Service; it is a demeaning process and I feel very strongly that the Department should not forget how it uses its

human resources and be alert to the kinds of people, particularly in the Bureaus, that manage the personnel system.

In the meantime, I decided that I didn't want to go to Senior seminar. This was the Fifth Seminar session. I preferred to go to the National War College because it was better known at that time. So I negotiated with Personnel and the assignment to the Senior Seminar was canceled. PER found some one else to go there and I was assigned to the War College. These negotiations took a little time and effort. In the meantime, I had learned more about the Senior Seminar. It was addressing the kinds of issues that I wanted to know more about—my country, for example. The Seminar took both domestic and foreign study trips and appeared more attuned to the issues that I wanted to become more familiar with. So despite the outstanding reputation of the War college, I decided I wanted to attend the Senior Seminar. I went to Personnel and got it to go back to the original plan. I was also told to never, never show my face in Personnel for at least one year so that they would forget this event.

Q: It was my experience at the Senior Seminar that if you were to be a Political Officer, the National War College is very good, not necessarily for what you learn, but for the contacts you make.

BROWN: I had a very interesting year. My paper was on the “Promotion of Science and Technology in the Development of New Nations.” I had been reading a lot of science and technology material because I knew so little about either. I walked where most people feared to tread. It was an extraordinary challenge for me because I had so much to learn. I came up with a number of policy recommendations of what we should do vis-a-vis developing nations and how we should we try to relate to them in this area. These were specific action recommendations that, in part, came to play a role in my subsequent career.

Q: After the Senior Seminar, you were assigned to Personnel.

BROWN: After all the trouble I had put them through, I guess they decided to get even with me. They called me and asked me what I wanted to do. I had been in economics long enough and I had to break out. I told them I preferred an assignment that would make or break me. I had to know whether I was viable in the Service over the long term. So I wanted something I had never done before; if I didn't do well, I would be fired and that would be the end. I was still young enough for a second career. The next thing that happened was that I was called into the Personnel Director's office. He told me that he wanted me to be associated to his Office. Result: An assignment as Chief of the European Personnel Operations.

Q: Please comment on how the system operated in the early "60s and also on the perception that still exists that European personnel was really the one that people wanted to get into because they wanted assignments in Europe. There is also the perception that European personnel is a closed circle, difficult to break into, but once there, you'll be taken care of for the rest of your career.

BROWN: I was very flattered to have Europe as my bailiwick because in many respects, your comments are correct. I had many candidates for jobs, but we had a panel operation made of others like me representing Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and functional bureaus—a very honest operation. As the European Chief I was in the minority. If anyone thought that my colleagues who handled Africa or the Middle East or Asia or Latin America or Washington had any sympathy for me, you had to be out of your mind. I had to fight; I had to work to get the kinds of people we wanted. People thought that sounded funny because I had the candidates, I had the support of the Bureau, but I had to compromise. My colleagues included Charlie Whitehouse, Frank Carlucci—later Secretary of Defense, Arch Blood, Ben Read—who was the great overseer of the operation at that time. You had be cunning to get the people you wanted, but you didn't always win and I should not have. When I sometime lost, I didn't surrender, but I didn't raise a great fuss because I knew other geographic areas also had vital needs. Further, another assignment

in EUR was not necessarily in the interest of the individual officer and his career. I had served in some less pleasant places and therefore I knew a little about out-of-Europe assignments.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia during this period and the esprit de corps was great. But the general perception was that Africa, the Middle East and the Far East had challenging posts and were good solid assignments, but one had to be very careful about Latin America. The perception was that ARA was some how second rate and once you got in, you couldn't get out. What were your perceptions in the mid-60s?

BROWN: I had the same perception, which I had picked up through the system. Latin America was not regarded as the area where the best people went. Also it always appeared to me as close to home which, of course, was a naive view. Fundamentally, that was a very difficult area to get volunteers. Africa was also difficult until the various dependencies became independent. Then many officers started to perceive of Africa as the road to an Ambassadorship. For me that was an insufficient inducement.

You mentioned a circle of friends who had served in Eastern Europe. There was a “German club”, there was a “Parisian club”, there was an Asian group who wanted to divvy things up. These were “closed circuit” operations. I was trying to move in and out of these groupings. No one cared as long as I was in a position that no one else wanted, but as soon as one started to fill a very desirable position, who got the priority? That didn't start necessarily in Personnel; it started in the “closed circuit” operations of the geographical Bureaus, whether you were an area specialist or language specialist or an expert on a matter relevant to a particular operation. You worked your way up the “club” ladder. The pressures on Personnel become manifest and difficult to manage. I didn't believe in that kind of a system. I didn't always believe that a German specialist should always go back to Germany. He should get a hardship posts once in a while. I tried to be helpful although it was not always appreciated. I did try because I believed it was fair and I thought that some officers would also be helped by an assignment in an another area. That “closed circuit”

operation still rules the Department today in many respects. It still relevant to the American Foreign Service Association people. AFSA became a union. That became a “club.” The leadership helped each other and pulled each other up the ladder. Some of that still exists in the Department today. If you don't see it, it is only because you haven't looked at it. It is still there. That system was at its height in the mid-60s. It now has generalized itself. The officers who have “cross-functionalized” and risen in the system, have brought others with them.

Q: You did not use your leverage as the EUR personnel officer to get an assignment in Europe, which would have been the customary practice. Rather, you went to Taipei as Economic Counselor and acting AID Director from 1965-68. How did that happen?

BROWN: I had learned a lot and particularly in Personnel. You see what happens to your colleagues. I learned that a DCM has one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. If you are good, the Ambassador will appreciate it. If you are too good, the Ambassador may resent it particularly if he perceives that a DCM has certain desirable attributes that the Ambassador doesn't. If you don't do well, then you haven't met his goals and objectives and then you will get a poor efficiency report. I also found as I progressed through the Service and watched it, that you should go where the action is. That is where the attention is focused. Taipei was ready to “take off;” that was foreordained. It was just a long runway. They had to work hard, but their success was predictable. I also considered that this assignment would be educational. Also I wanted to make sure that my son would never be deprived of an adequate education so that he could return to an American High School or an American University without being disadvantaged. For me it was important that my next assignment would have adequate educational facilities that melded into the US educational system.

Q: I operated under that theory and I think most people did. Schooling for your children is very important because as Americans, we generally don't believe sending our kids away to school; so we want to go to a place where we can live as a family.

BROWN: You are right and it is understandable. However, there are some of our colleagues who are prepared and willing to sacrifice family for career opportunities. My wife had glaucoma. I wanted to be sure that the post had adequate medical care. Taipei also had a cost-of-living allowance, which was not available at many other posts. I also viewed it as a stepping stone. So all of these factors led me to choose Taipei.

Q: What was the situation in Taipei when you got there in 1965?

BROWN: The Section was in a viable but marginal situation. It was obvious that the AID program should come to an end. Nearly everyone was fighting it, hook line, and sinker. When I arrived, I went back to what I learned about science and technology and its development. Based on the papers I had written, I developed a concept of whole series of bridges which involved, inter alia, science, technology, commerce, sister city-to-city and industry-to-industry programs. I wanted Americans to come out to see Taipei. I wanted the Taiwanese to pass laws which would encourage investments, which would entice Americans to the island. Little by little—it didn't take that long—they changed. I became the acting AID director because we finished the program for all intense and purposes. Some of my colleagues approached me in subsequent years to apologize because many were convinced that I was off my rocker when I made some of my projections. They said that I saw matters much more clearly then they had. I am not saying that to complement myself, but it was an insight that I had based on my education and experiences in Belgium, Japan and other places.

Q: Let me ask about the fight with AID. Did you have a lot of opposition and how did you manage the program's demise?

BROWN: There was a set of fortuitous circumstances. First of all, it was self-evident that Taiwan's economy was improving, that it was becoming viable. It was also self-evident that the excessive dependency was no longer necessary. It was also becoming obvious that Chiang Kai-shek was no longer a viable threat to the mainland. Congress was no longer

as self-possessive about Chiang, although Walter Judd and company were still around. New Congressmen were on the scene who were not as obsessive about China as some of their elders and predecessors. The American AID officials there knew the circumstances; it was pretty self-evident. Since they had been successful, good assignments could be anticipated for them. But it took a political decision by the Ambassador. We convinced the Chinese that the cessation of assistance would be to their advantage. They didn't protest as vehemently as they might have five or ten years earlier. I think therefore it was easier to terminate the Taiwan aid program than it had been in Belgium years earlier. The Taiwan program went out nicely.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

BROWN: Walter McConaughy. He eventually supported me because I had to deal with AID which unto itself was difficult. I also had to watch how the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was operating. They were providing training and material to the Chinese military. As this was a resource coming into the country, the Ambassador decided that I was the Embassy's officer for MAAG issues. The Political section didn't like the job because it was sticky wicket, argumentative, full of details, dealing with pushy generals, etc. I had of course dealt with similar issues before and I didn't find it all that challenging. In short I did not come with any significant biases. So I took on the MAAG responsibility. One day, the Ambassador was called to see Chiang Kai-shek who wanted to thank him for the assistance that a member of the Embassy staff by the name of Robert Brown had rendered. Chiang said that he had heard the name from all of his colleagues and friends; he had been told that Brown was working very hard for the Ambassador and the US and Taiwan. Chiang said that he would like it very much if the Ambassador would tell Brown that the President greatly appreciated Brown's efforts. The Ambassador subsequently called a country team meeting that same day and related the story. He was smiling like a cat that had just eaten three mice. He was pleased. Because we had terminated

the assistance program it was all the more important. We were under fair weather both politically and economically.

I should also mention that we got the President's Science Advisor to come to Taiwan. The AID representative was still there. He and the Ambassador and the DCM went to the meeting with Chiang Kai-shek. I was the note taker as the lowest ranking man in the room. Chiang went around the room asking people what they thought. He turned to me before many others had spoken and he asked for my opinion. I told him that was very difficult. Taiwan had the sun, the water and the earth—that was a given. The sun and the water had been very gracious; the earth was limited and there are many people. Taiwan had made a great and meaningful step when it distributed land to the farmers; that intensive farming on Taiwan was an example for the world. It appeared that with the development of industry, there would be new options for his economy which could compete with the Japanese. But I though more could be done for the people. That was interpreted as a political commentary. I mentioned that the majority of his people were under twenty-one and I suggested that they needed more education—they were only going through the sixth grade. I said that these young people were a resource that must be taken advantage of because they were good, hard working people; now was the time to give them more compulsory education. Within one year, compulsory education was established through eighth grade. It was one of the rare occasions when I had tears in my eyes for a positive contribution. Hundreds of thousands of students went to school; schools were built; teachers found and it worked.

Q: After Taiwan, you were assigned from 1968 to 1971 to the Department as Deputy Executive Secretary.

BROWN: Yes, that was quite an honor. It was a considerable change from economics. I was responsibility for the input of the Department to the Secretary and the Under Secretaries and in relaying to the Bureaus what the Secretary wanted done. More importantly, we had to see that what he wanted done, was done in the way it should be

done with all the relevant issues included, fully and thoughtfully discussed and done on time. We managed the Bureaus. I remember upon returning to the Department being told: “Bob, the Secretary could have chosen any one in the Service for this job, but he chose you. You are allowed to make one mistake, but you better make it in the first month because after that, it will not be acceptable.” After that, it was day and night, seven days a week. It was worth it because I was involved with the major issues, and dealt with the NSC, with CIA and other agencies. I found out how weak the Department was and how strong it could be.

Q: Where were the weaknesses and the strengths?

BROWN: You could see the weaknesses from the management of the Bureaus. When you asked the Bureau of European Affairs for something, you usually got a first class piece of work on time, properly prepared. You could go to other Bureaus—I say this without being demeaning—African Affairs for example, where the writing, the skills of dealing with policy issues and getting something to the Secretary were not as good. Latin American Affairs was not as good. Joe Sisco and Roy Atherton ran NEA perfectly. They knew how. The Far Eastern Affairs Bureau was good. It was always management. It was the same way for functional bureaus; some were on top of things, others less effective. When the Secretary asks for something, it had to be done right.

Then there were the briefing books for the President, speeches for the Secretary, Congressional presentations and correspondence, briefing papers for meetings that the Secretary and the Under Secretaries participated in. We were backstopping all the Senior officials of the Department. There of course some papers initiated by the Bureaus, but much of the paperwork was in response to a task assigned by the Secretariat on the Bureaus. I also had to do the evening reports to the President.

Q: This was at the height of the Vietnam War. What was your impression of the material that the President was getting?

BROWN: We were negotiating in Paris to bring the war to a conclusion. All the papers were coming through the Secretariat. We were seeing the negotiating process and the political climate in this country, including the demonstrations on the Mall which I could see from my office window—tent city, etc. We saw how difficult it was to extricate ourselves in a manner that could be both timely and appropriate. It was a difficult job. We bombed the Hanoi trail and Cambodia and therefore brought it into the process. Some of the legacies of Vietnam are still with us. It was a very inopportune war in an inopportune place. While in Taiwan I had had the opportunity to go to Vietnam and travel extensively throughout the areas where we were militarily engaged. What I saw left an indelible mark in my memory and in the Secretariat it was with me every morning, every night. It was the first thing on your desk and the last one. The NSC was on the back of the Department to the degree it wanted to—if they didn't want you to know something, you had to find out in some other way.

Q: You served Rusk part of the time and Rogers the rest. What were the differences in style and effectiveness?

BROWN: Dean Rusk knew how many Americans had died in every conflict we had ever been engaged in since the end of World War II. He knew how many had died or had been injured in Vietnam. I have seen Rusk with tears in eyes when discussing how much America had given to preserve freedom around the world; how that was not always understood not only in the US, but also abroad. I worked for Rogers subsequently, who was a nice man, a lawyer, but Henry Kissinger was sitting in the other building, with Al Haig as his deputy. That was one of the reasons I eventually left. I remember doing the evening report to the President every night before I went home. It had to be one piece of paper. It was never manipulated, sent back or changed. No comments on it. That one page was the report from the Secretary of State which informed the President on matters that he should know, which he would not get from the press or any of the media, other agencies. These were unique reports which included items, both foreign and

Congressional, important enough for him. Rogers replaced many of the Seventh Floor—the “Executive Suites”—officials, who had been appointed by Rusk. But he kept me and that was a giant step for my career. I remember in one of the early days being called to the Secretary's office. I thought that my tenure in the Secretariat was about to come to an end. I would have been disappointed, but not surprised. But he said: “Bob, I just have returned from talking to the President. He said that he wanted me to tell the person who writes the evening report—I know you don't write it—that it is the best single piece of paper that I read since I have been in this Office and the most meaningful.” That is what I was told when I expected to be fired.

Q: Can you give us some insight in the very interesting relationship between Rogers, Kissinger and Richard Nixon, who probably paid more attention to foreign affairs than any other President we have had?

BROWN: It became obvious very early on that it was a non-starter. Kissinger had the NSC so organized that it would not be able to duplicate the work of the Department, but that it could manage our work. Then he sat up a series of different kinds of papers and groups, which had to meet at different levels and on different subjects. He would call upon these groups; agencies had to submit their papers before hand. We were out managed by Henry Kissinger and by the pressures the NSC could apply upon the Assistant Secretaries because we did not have the support of a Secretary who would be willing to go the President and put his foot down. When we decided that the Department would make an annual report to the President on the State of Foreign Affairs it was Kissinger who ultimately made the report. We tasked all of the Bureaus to write this report—the first time it had ever been done. The clock was running and you should have seen the junk we got. Most Assistant Secretaries had not taken the tasking seriously. In the meantime, Kissinger was producing. We advised Rogers to call the Assistant Secretaries together, which he did. He asked those gathered how many had read what had been sent to him from their Bureau. Very few hands went up. Most of the Assistant Secretaries had not read their own report. He said he wasn't surprised because he didn't think that they considered the

task very important. He then added that this meeting would be short because he wanted all the Assistant Secretaries to go back to their offices to rewrite their contributions. But by that time, we were already behind the curve. Henry's report came out first, ours was second, ours was not as good, not as comprehensive. It was another one of those very disappointing events. It eventually became obvious that all my work, day and night, seven days a week, was not worth it because we were being snookered all the time.

Q: In a recent interview with me, an officer who was at the NSC at that time said that although that staff had a lot of power, a lot of things were done off the tops of their heads. Many things appeared to be flashy, but were not necessarily well thought out. There was a certain amount of superficiality about them. Would you agree with that view?

BROWN: That may have been true, but they were better than what the Department was putting out. That was the bottom line. I will give you an example of how poorly the system could work. After I left the Secretariat, I was called to see whether I would take the job of Special Assistant to the Secretary for the Twentieth Anniversary of the United Nations. I took the job. We wanted to invite all the Chiefs of State who would be in New York to attend a White House dinner. It was a first in the history of our country—a unique opportunity. So we planned and programmed. We needed translators for each of the guests. We asked the Bureaus to name those who would represent the Department at the dinner. All the Bureaus gave me names of people who were not only interpreters, but people who knew substance as well. All the Bureaus saw the opportunity to have their key officers attend this unique dinner. We had special certificates prepared for them from the President. They were given a honorific title. The Bureau of African Affairs came up with the poorest list. Since I had been in Personnel, I was fully aware of the bureaucratic games. I called the NSC officer, who later became an Assistant Secretary. We both agreed that this list was extraordinarily poor. I then called Dave Newsom, then Assistant Secretary to AF and later Under Secretary, and told him that we needed a better list. Dave said that it couldn't be done. He had reviewed the list himself. In short he did not listen to me. I went back to the NSC officer to report my conversation. He was angry. Twenty-four hours

later there was a new list on my desk. The NSC representative had told Newsom that he wanted a new list. I had no alternative but to call Dave and tell him that it was too bad when the Secretary of State's representative asked for something involving the White House, he could get no response, but when an NSC staffer called, he got action. I told him that I was very disappointed and hung up.

Q: From 1972 to 1975, you were in Personnel-Employment and Recruitment. What were the major things you were concerned with?

BROWN: The reason I went back to Personnel was because I felt that I had enough of working day in and day out, 14-16 hours a day. I felt I needed a respite. Also I felt that if I were in Personnel, I could pick my next assignment. In the meantime, I had been promoted to FSO-1 and I had received a Superior Honor Award. When I went to personnel, I was put in charge of FSO-3 officers, which was not a great challenge. However, it worked out well.

In those days for each class of officers we had two operations: counseling and assignment. The counseling operation told officers how they might best enhance their career prospects; the assignment officers made the assignment decisions. An officer could be counseled forever, but it didn't necessarily have any relevance to what was available. I was responsible for assignments and decided that if I had a good FSO-3 who deserved a job better than anything available-and if I saw an FSO-2 or FSO-1 position which was about to be filled by an officer at that rank who was less deserving than my candidate, I would try to push my candidate, even though he was junior in grade to the others. This was not entirely appreciated and ruffled some of the waters in the Department. I can't tell you the number of positive things I did for the Service and for the officers by taking this approach. It did of course create a problem for the Service because that created a surplus of FSO-2 and FSO-1 officers who went unassigned. History will answer which approach served the Service better. Do you take a less capable officer and put him into a job so that

he does not go unassigned or are the Service's requirements the most important issue. I took the latter position. That was my challenge in those years.

Q: Then you went to NATO as Political Advisor to General Haig in 1975.

BROWN: Before taking on that assignment, I had become responsible for the employment operation of the Department. My major challenge there was to assure that we were hiring the right people. You could only get from society the best it produced. I was a Deputy Director of Personnel for Recruitment and Employment. My first decision was to bar the assignment of any officer to my Office who was not promotable and assignable. I would rather leave the position vacant than take second-class officers to do what I believed necessary for a first-class job. I also tried to take an interest in their onward assignments to the degree that I could because I felt that was part of my commitment. Our selection and the number of people we hired—1160 Foreign Service Officers in three years, 212 Staff Officers, 673 Civil Service employees. That number left a mark on the Service. We also hired others for a total 4,400 new employees. That was one of the most extraordinary opportunities I had. We had to be intellectually totally honest.

On the officers' side we tried very hard to make the written examination fairer. We over-hauled the whole written exam; went out for new contracts; re-wrote the questions to be relevant to the jobs. We had a mixture of Foreign Service Officers—senior, junior, Caucasian, non-Caucasian—writing the questions. We added questions covering black history and other new subjects that had become relevant in our society. We tried to make the written examination a fair first cut. The second aspect was to get the oral examiners to be able to make a proper decision with respect to the quality of the candidate on an over-all basis. It was important for us to encourage people to take the examination if we wanted a base of outstanding candidates. You could beat the drums throughout the country, but how many people will try something that they think they are going to fail? Eventually we had as many as 18,000 taking a exam for some 200 jobs. However, I am still convinced that Service did not appear to be that attractive to many capable young people in that

generation. I had the same problem on the non-Foreign Service side. That was equally difficult to find competent people, given our salaries and the marketplace. We may also have higher standards than other employers. We never compromised on quality just to fill jobs. If there was going to be a short-fall, that was too bad. The pressures could be extraordinary. However, I had no personal problem in telling one Deputy Under Secretary who called me to ask why his son hadn't passed the oral examination.

My next assignment—NATO—shows what happens when you try to be helpful to somebody. There was an officer who worked for me in Personnel who was a politico-military expert. I had written to General Haig because I had worked with him when he was at the NSC. Haig found—for reasons that I will never understand—that my responsiveness, instead of being argumentative, was positive and helpful though I wouldn't be pushed around. I had written a letter on behalf of this officer recommending him to General Haig. This letter apparently stuck in a cord Haig's mind when he needed a new Political Advisor. He and Larry Eagleburger got together and that took care of my assignment and I became General Haig's Political Advisor.

Q: Tell us a little about Alexander Haig and how he handled the political situation in Europe.

BROWN: He was unique. You have to remember that he went to Europe at President Ford's request, presumably as a political appointee. Therefore his arrival was not looked upon by NATO and many of the leaders of other nations as one that they were happy with. If he had just been a military commander, it would never have worked. It was because he was politically astute, not only in the US terms, but also in terms of Western Europe and the world. This man had been close to Kissinger; he understood the issues and the pressures. He proved himself. His ability to communicate substantively in a very brief, effective fashion with major Western European leaders at various levels was outstanding and received with applause. For all purposes he became part and parcel of the Community. He was totally accepted and with thanks—except in some places, such

as NATO, where he may have been a little too aggressive for the decisions that NATO wanted to make and those that he wanted to make as Commander in Chief of the NATO forces.

Q: It would seem that being a political advisor to Haig might almost be superfluous, unlike being one to other military commanders who had little knowledge of the world outside. How did you find it?

BROWN: Having sat in the cat bird seat as Deputy Executive Director in the Department didn't give me the kind of oversight that Haig had, but it did give me an oversight that served me well in that kind of situation. When I came there, Haig said that he didn't want any surprises. He wanted to hear all the relevant news, good or bad. He said he wanted to hear from me every day. Obviously I didn't want to tell him things that he already knew. It was like doing the evening report to the President. In that sense, it was a great challenge and a great opportunity, but it was extraordinarily complex because we were in a Carter Administration, we had Secretary Vance—who was not necessarily one of our strongest Secretaries—we had Les Gelb running the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs and Haig was not necessarily appreciated in Washington by the Department of State—for reasons that were not deserved. That was the atmosphere that I had to work in. I had two sources: one was Europe and the other was the US that involved a lot of confidences. I proceeded to get all the Political Advisors together for the first time in regular meetings; get on the airplane every time Haig came back to the United States. I didn't carry his bag and he did not want me. Further it would be superfluous to duplicate efforts. I went around town trying to find out what I needed to find out. Sometimes people were helpful; sometimes less than helpful. Eventually you find who falls into the helpful category. After all, I was not doing intelligence work for a foreign power.

Q: What are your thoughts on some of the personalities in the Carter Administration—Les Gelb for example, who was and is now a newspaper man?

BROWN: His relationships with Haig were less than happy and they were not happy with me either. I don't believe he trusted Haig and because I was associated with Haig, I know he did not trusted. He knew I was trying to find out things for Haig. There were so many negotiations going on in Geneva and with the Russians on a whole range of issues. A number of officials did not have the courtesy to ask for the views of the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR). Haig wore two hats; he was also Commander-in-Chief of US Forces in Europe and therefore many questions could be posed to Haig. So we had to try to have some input into these negotiations and events that were relevant to the interests of the Western European powers who were associated in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We didn't think that was too much to ask. The US officials said that they worked through these governments; we know that this was not always true. We knew how other nations were surprised by certain events. In any event, Les Gelb and I did not end up on very friendly terms. He tried to have me reassigned. Obviously he failed. However, once you know where your problem is, you search out your friends to negate your opposition. Fortunately for me Les was more capable of losing friends than in winning them.

Q: As I understand it, the man who was responsible for politico-military affairs in the department was not being helpful. You have to find out things for your principal, some times surreptitiously. How did you do it?

BROWN: First of all, even within the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, there were officers who understood what the game was. I would sometime go in early in the morning or I would stay late at night or on weekends. Some were accommodating. They understood I was not working for a foreign power. That was all I needed. Fortunately, in the Department's system, what you couldn't get out of one Bureau, you most certainly would get out of another. The Bureau of European Affairs had an Office of Regional Politico-Military Affairs (RPM) and I could go there. I could go to the people I knew in the Secretariat or to the staff people in the Office of the Under Secretary for Politico-Military

Affairs to see papers that were being sent to him. I could go see an Assistant Secretary on matters that were very highly classified. The first thing you had to find out what you didn't know and then you had to find out what happen. Someone would tell me that subject “X” was being worked on and was probably finished. I knew that “X” was important. Then I had to find out what had been said about subject “X”. You don't go to the drafting officer, unless he is a close friend. Papers are distributed in the Department and as in all of the government like confetti. You have to use your wits. The Secretariat experience gave me an advantage of knowing were to reach and never over-reach. In that way, I was able to feed that tiger called Haig and fed him things that I thought he should know—not gossip, but that things that he should know and didn't. Also by going to Embassies in other capitals throughout the Europe, I picked up information to keep ahead of the curve. What you could not pick up in Washington, you could get from our Embassies. Haig also had his own sources from the Pentagon, other agencies in the government, the intelligence services so that we managed to keep up. He could phone to all sorts of places in Washington and other military commanders in the field. He used these sources. Sometime he was frustrated but seldomly.

Q: One issue that comes immediately to mind which should have been difficult for both Haig and yourself must have been the “waffling” on the neutron bomb. This weapon was supposed to be able to penetrate tanks. First we pushed very hard, then Carter slowed it down, because it was unpopular since it would kill people and not property. The Germans were particularly upset, but Helmut Schmidt went out on a limb and supported it. Then Carter retreated and left Schmidt exposed to the ire of his party and countrymen. How did that strike you?

BROWN: First of all, the “waffling” was done very carefully by President Carter. I can't go into detail, but Haig did participate in the negotiations. It was obviously a very uncomfortable position for General Haig. One thing we knew was that we couldn't win all the time in that Administration. For example, I know that Schmidt and Haig had a special relationship. On a major matters, they could and did meet. But Haig's influence

in the Carter Administration was limited and we all knew that. Sometimes you could get other governments to do the job for you. Haig, as a Nixon appointee, was respected, but never trusted by the Carter Administration. It was like having a political appointee as Ambassador. You'll work through that Ambassador if you have to. Haig had other ways to have influence on policy. I have to be careful because I was never present when Haig tried to encourage another government to initiate a policy it had not considered as being in its interests or to try to circumscribe something the US wanted. He played the game straight. He tried to persuade, but I never saw him undercut his own Administration.

Q: That is interesting because I have it from other interviewees that Henry Kissinger would do that during negotiations. Some who were involved in negotiations on behalf of the United States found out that Kissinger was telling the Russian Ambassador not to pay any attention to our negotiators.

BROWN: Haig would never have done that. He would be an able bureaucratic in-fighter, but where the US was involved with foreign powers and leaders, it was an entirely different situation. He never deliberately undermined US policy. He may not have supported it and he may not have encouraged people to do what he considered in error, but he would never have put a match to the fire-cracker. Kissinger, on the other hand, according to what I have heard, played both sides of any situation to the degree that it fit into his own game plan.

Q: After NATO, you went into the Inspection Corps.

BROWN: That's right. I left NATO after Haig left since we change POLADs when SACEUR are changed. But it was a holding pattern because the Inspector General knew that I planned to retire. I was available for some work, which I did, but I always intended to retire after returning from NATO. But after I retired from Service, I was recalled to become the Inspector General. Very few are ever called back to the Department after retirement. I was

the first Inspector General to be appointed by the President although I had been selected by Al Haig.

Q: Tell us something about the Inspection Corp at that time and what were your major tasks?

BROWN: Again, like some of my other assignments, the Inspection Corps had earned the reputation as a dead end—not a place to get promoted. It was not a good place for an onward assignment. It was a good assignment if you wanted to travel. It was not an office in which you found dynamic officers. You sometimes got an officer who had been selected to become an Ambassador, but needed a short assignment until the necessary arrangements were completed. The Inspection Corps therefore could be a holding pattern for good officers, but as a regular assignment, it was not considered as prestigious as it should have been when you consider it was inspecting one's own Institution and colleagues. The right to evaluate officers had been taken from the Inspection Corps. So the Inspection Corps inspected the system but not the officers. Personnel didn't like that at all and they wanted the Inspection Corps to continue personnel evaluations because they need all the input they could get, particularly when they are objective. When the personnel evaluation function was eliminated, the office became even less influential except when someone would try to use for his or her own purposes. Fortunately, when I took the job, the President had decided that he wanted to fight waste and fraud and instill good management practices. He wanted to use the Inspection Corps in the various agencies for this purpose. I was appointed to a Presidential panel to try to work out the President's objectives with the President chairing it. In State, I had to reorganize the Inspection Corps so that we could establish an audit and investigation operations. I created two additional deputies because I didn't want the Security Office doing the investigations unless I had a Deputy under my jurisdiction. The results were that the Office was reorganized, a real audit operation established, a real investigative operation was set up and a standard was set that I would not have anyone assigned to the Office that I did not believe was promotable or could get a good onward assignment. The amount of cooperation I received

from the personnel system was exactly what I would have expected. It was next to zilch. My counter to that was to leave the position vacant and would not do the inspections I remained unwilling to take officers that I didn't think could do the kind of job I wanted done. I set a pretty hard standard. My fall-back was to bring in retired Foreign Service Officers, former Ambassadors and others—people who were not over the hill—who would give me an honest opinion (they had already retired). When I started to do this, that irritated Personnel even more because they had officers unassigned—"walking the halls" as they called it—and I was going out to bring in people from the outside as consultants. I told them I could always change this practice as soon as they assigned the right caliber of officers to the I.G. It was a hell of a battle. I never really felt that I won it, but I did find a way to alleviate the problems of that system.

The reflexes of this new inspection system were understood by the financial operations of the Department and I was very pleased. The Security office never understood the system and what they could have done with it if they had understood it. It failed miserably in real terms. Incidentally, the threat of all of this was that, as I kept saying, that if we did not run the system well ourselves and Congress didn't want a Foreign Service Officer running it. They believed that we had a bias and were not honest by being more loyal to the system than to the cause—a political appointee would be asked to run it. No one listened. It was an "out of sight, out of mind;" nobody gave a damn. The Bureau of Consular Affairs wanted to use the I.G. Office as an escape hatch for things they could not handle. So I had to make sure that I served the Department and not be used. I did not mind involvement in visa fraud cases, but other kinds of things such as welfare and problems they had with the Hill were matters that they wanted to involve us and I didn't feel those were our problems. We would do an inspection and write a report, but it was up to the management to implement the recommendations. I did require implementation of our recommendations; that is another thing we implemented. We also started doing some cost accounting—how much we were saving in real money, not artificial tetus. The management operations office wanted to use our reports on a selective basis as did the Bureaus, who wanted to

use some reports and not others. I guess that is a normal reflex, but of all the Bureaus I dealt with, I found that Personnel was the most difficult. I had problems with others—we always have problems. They are to be expected. I even set up a committee to make sure that I could draw in the views of Consular Affairs, Security, the Budget Office, the Office of the Under Secretary for Management, etc. so that we could program things intelligently and would not be caught by surprise. It was a good instrument in many ways but it did not solve all the problems. That would have been impossible in light of some of the people who served on this committee and given who was running the operations. The result was that after two and half years, I resigned, not out of pique but because I had enough. And sure enough, the White House had its own candidate, got into an impasse with State and Congress and eventually an Inspector General was appointed from the outside and that will remain so. As far as I am concerned the Service got what it deserved.

Q: Looking back on your entire career, what time gave you the greatest feeling of accomplishment?

BROWN: In a very real sense, I know what that assignment was and that was my first post in Noumea because I know what I did. Nobody else really knows and now even my own memory of it is fading. I know that the most tangible, real things in health, life, and matters involving the security of our country, of being required to make decisions without consultations, having to work unbelievably hard, always knowing that I was vulnerable if I made a mistake. That was the most rewarding job I had and the least recognized. The next one was being in the Secretariat which was extraordinarily interesting because without an overview of the Department, you are always somewhat handicapped. The other good assignment was working in Brussels because I was working for someone better than myself. I learned the advantages of working for successful people are to take risks. But that should not be done until one is ready. That is the bottom line because being over-ambitious without the ability to match can be the end of a potentially rewarding career. I think the advantages of serving as Economic Counselor in Taipei were extraordinary; it was like being a Japanese Cormorant fisherman—you have to have your hands on all the

strings and you could see and feel what was happening. It was such a small, but dynamic economy. It was one of the most interesting jobs I had. I think that being Inspector General was full of frustrations, but it challenged any and all the management skills I had ever had to keep that operation going—nobody was quite on my side, either in Washington or abroad.

Q: A last question. If a young person would come to you today to ask: "What about a Foreign Service career?" How would you advise?

BROWN: A few years ago, when my son asked me that question, I said: "No." One has to bear in mind that the kind of a Service that I described, except in my very last period, does not exist anymore. When you have big problems, we have a communication system that now over-rides all past avenues. Between cables, jet airplanes, telephones, and the fax machine, if there is an issue of really major substance—a major policy issue—the policy maker will use these channels in preference to his representative in the field. The person abroad is no longer in a position to have much say, unless you work for someone like SACEUR, where you can influence a single individual with command responsibilities. That is however rare. If you want to make policy, stay in Washington, fighting with all the other bureaucracies. If you want to make a mark and be disappointed often, then work in Washington and become a specialist, but if you want a good life, then the Foreign Service is still a fine career, but it doesn't hold the career rewards that I gained from it. The opportunity for unique ability and unique decision-making is becoming less and less. The opportunity to be assassinated is becoming greater, but to do unusual service, when all the modern avenues of communications are available to senior officials, is going to be very difficult.

End of interview